

Here are some answers to a few common questions about Mammoth Cave National Park.

What are the features of this park?

Mammoth Cave National Park encompasses 52,830 acres in south central Kentucky, commemorating the diverse geological, biological and historical features associated with the longest cave in the world. The surface landscape highlights rare plants and dense forest, a diverse aquatic ecosystem in the Green and Nolin Rivers, and hallmark geologic features of a classic karst terrain. Great Onyx Job Corps Center, under the Department of Labor, is located in the park on the north side of the Green River.

What is the history of this place?

Native Americans discovered Mammoth Cave about 4,000 years ago and continued to use it for 2,000 years. In the late 1790s settlers "rediscovered" the cave, and during the War of 1812 slaves mined saltpetre from the cave sediments to be used in the manufacture of gunpowder. Tours began in 1816, increasing the cave's notoriety, and drawing visitors in ever greater numbers. Over a century of private ownership and exploration of the cave followed. Then, in 1926, Congress authorized the formation of a national park in the Mammoth Cave area to protect the caves, hilly country, and scenic river valleys typical of south central Kentucky. The park was officially established on July 1, 1941. It later gained World Heritage Site designation in 1981, and became the core area of an International Biosphere Reserve in 1990.

What is there to do in the park?

The park has 14 miles of developed cave trails, 31 miles of the Green and Nolin Rivers to canoe and fish, 101 miles of roads to drive, and 73 miles of horse and hiking trails. Visitors can participate in ranger-led cave trips and surface walks, campfire and amphitheatre programs, children's activities; hike; picnic; backpack; camp; ride horseback; boat; fish; and take a one-hour concessions-operated riverboat cruise on the Green River. School groups can participate in the Environmental Education program. Reservations are strongly recommended for cave trips

and are required for school group programs. Concessioners operate canoe and horse liveryes. Overnight accommodations and a campstore are within the park. Most facilities are handicapped accessible.

How many people use the park?

In 1999, the park had:
 2 million visitors in the park
 .5 million visitors on cave tours
 42,698 visitors on 1,113 ranger-led surface activities
 65,040 visitors in the campgrounds
 47,904 backcountry hikers
 1,966 horseback riders
 7,033 visitors using the Green and Nolin rivers

What lives in the park?

Mammoth Cave National Park is one of the greatest protectors of plants and animals in Kentucky – underground and on the surface.

In the cave: Of the over 130 species documented in the cave, 12 are eyeless, unpigmented cave dwellers such as fish, crayfish, beetles and harvestmen. Over millions of years, many of these species were isolated from other caves, resulting in fragile and unique populations. Three endangered species – Kentucky cave shrimp, Indiana bat and Gray bat – call Mammoth Cave home.

On the surface: While most of the park consists of second-growth woodland, a number of special plant communities – wetlands, rare Kentucky prairies, hemlock groves and sinkhole microclimates – harbor many of the park's rare species. The park's diverse plant communities support deer, raccoon, opossum, gray squirrel, rabbit, woodchuck, muskrat, beaver, red fox, coyote, beavers, hawks, owls, and wild turkey – just to name the most common creatures. The Green River supports more than 80 species of fish, and more than 70 species of freshwater mussels live in the river sand, gravel and mud. This bounty of life makes the Green River one of the most biologically diverse river habitats in the National Park System.



What does it take to run this park?

Our budget in 1999 for Mammoth Cave National Park was \$4,566,000. The park budget in 1998 was \$4,456,000.

The park employed 78 permanent staff and 79 seasonal or temporary staff in 1999.

How much cave is down there?

Nobody knows. As of March 1996, the Cave Research Foundation had mapped and surveyed more than 350 miles of passage, but exploration and re-survey continue. In addition to exploring and mapping the cave, CRF also contributes to our knowledge of the cave through many re-search projects.

How can I get more information?

For park information, call (270)758-2328 or write:

Superintendent
Mammoth Cave National Park
P.O. Box 7
Mammoth Cave, KY 42259-0007

On the **Internet**, search the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.nps.gov/macac/macahome.htm>

For area information, dial (800)346-8908

For **cave tour, campground, and picnic shelter reservations**, contact the National Park Reservation Service at (800)967-2283. Or, reserve online at: <http://reservations.nps.gov>.